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ABSTRACT

The ergative construction is characteristic of all 37 languages of the Caucasian group. After definition of "subject" and "object," a summary is given of 13 Caucasian intransitive and transitive sentence-types, with respect to the case forms of their subjects and objects. The principal "symptoms" of ergativity are: (1) subject in an oblique (ergative) case; (2) object in the nominative (or absolutive) case; (3) verb agrees in class and/or person and number with the object; and (4) in N.W. Caucasian only, pronominal prefixes in the sequence O-S-V. Numerous deviations are discussed. Arguments are presented against the once-popular view that the ergative construction is "really" a passive construction. In the N. Caucasian languages, the ergative transitive construction systematically contrasts with a nominative transitive construction (subject in nominative, object in nominative or oblique case). The ergative construction highlights the effect of the verbally expressed activity on the object; the nominative construction highlights the activity of the subject. Ergativity in all ergative languages can be classified as Functional (i.e., in meaningful contrast with a non-ergative transitive construction), as in N. Caucasian, Chukot-Kamchadal, Eskimo-Aleut, or Formal (i.e., as a mere obligatory formal feature of transitive sentences), as in Georgian and the Iranian, Dardic, and Indic ergative languages. (Author)

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ERGATIVITY IN CAUCASIAN LANGUAGES

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Ergativity in Caucasian Languages*

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1. In the last few years there has been a remarkable proliferation of references to ERGATIVITY in English language publications on linguistics. This wave of interest in ergativity apparently had its origins in two articles by Charles H. Fillmore. The first of these (1966) used the term ERGATIVE in a quite idiosyncratic way, but the second and more influential article ("The Case for Case," 1968) reverts to a more generally accepted use of the term.

2. The phenomenon of ergativity has been known to linguists since the early nineteenth century, but more particularly since the publications of von Gabelentz and Uslar on Tibetan and Caucasian languages, respectively, in the 1860's.

Ergativity has long been specially associated with Caucasian languages, and with good reason, since some form of ergative construction is found in all thirty-seven of them, although one of the two major dialects of the South Caucasian Zan language (namely Megrelian), while retaining a superficial "ergative" case-form, has lost the ergative function. Since some of the recent writers on ergativity appear not to have been fortunate enough to have had much acquaintance with these languages, it seemed to me that it would be helpful to exemplify and discuss the phenomenon of ergativity in Caucasian languages.

In what follows, then, I survey all the various surface manifestations of ergativity in Caucasian languages, briefly discuss the long out-dated view that the ergative construction is "really" a passive construction, and, finally try to form some idea of the MEANING of the ergative construction in the light of the linguistically significant opposition between the ergative and the non-ergative (or NOMINATIVE) transitive constructions which co-exist in Caucasian languages.

For readers who are not familiar with the location and classification of Caucasian languages, I provide a map and a classified list in appendix A, page 53.

3. The term ERGATIVE seems to have been coined by Adolf Dirr, who used it in his Einführung in das Studium der kaukasischen Sprachen (1928). Dirr provides no lengthy or formal definition of Ergativ, but the following quotations illustrate his use of the term to refer to (i) a surface case-form, (ii) a case-function and (iii) the particular transitive-verb construction characterized by having the subject in the ergative case.

The first example of (i) occurs on page 58: there, in a list of Georgian 'Deklinationsendungen' we find:

'Ergativ - -ma(n) -m'

An example of (ii) is on page 75: 'Im Ubychisschen hat der Obliquus ausser anderm auch die Funktion des Ergativs.'

The term ERGATIVE, used to characterize a type of construction (iii), occurs on page 75, where Dirr, alluding to the then popular conception of the ergative construction as being "passive," enumerates some of the different types of construction that occur in Caucasian languages: 'Statt von passiver Konstruktion zu sprechen werde ich die Ausdrüke Ergativ-Konstruktion (das log. Subjekt steht im Erg.), Dativ- oder Affektiv-Konstruktion (das log. Subj. steht im Dat. oder Affekt., mir-lieb-ist = ich liebe) und Nominativ-Konstruktion (das log. Subj. steht im Nom., = ich gehe, ich schlafe).' (All underlinings in these quotations are mine.)

It will be seen that Dirr's definition of the ergative construction refers only to the form of the subject: it makes no reference at all to the object, which, in a typical ergative construction, is in the unmarked or NOMINATIVE case — a fact that was, of course, well-known to Dirr.

4. Other writers have high-lighted this second characteristic of the ergative construction. Thus Trubetzkoy (1939) in discussing the relation of 'le déterminé' and 'le déterminant'

(meaning, in this context, roughly 'the presupposed' and 'the presupposing'), points out that languages differ with respect to the case of the noun that directly determines (or presupposes the existence of) a transitive verb. In some languages 'le déterminant du verbe transitif est le nom de l'auteur de l'action'; in others, it is 'le nom de l'objet de l'action'. In languages of the first type, the nominative is opposed to the ERGATIVE; in languages of the second type, the nominative is opposed to the ACCUSATIVE. That is to say, the ergative and accusative cases share an important function in the syntagmatic systems of their respective languages — namely that of being the immediate determinant (or PRESUPPOSER) of a transitive verb, although they do this, as it were, from "opposite sides" of the verb. This implies, of course, that an ergative transitive construction cannot have an object in the accusative case, and this is indeed the situation (with one exception) in Caucasian languages, a circumstance that led Chikobava (1967) to suggest that the ergative construction might well be called the 'accusative-less' construction. In Caucasian languages, as in other 'ergative languages', the object of a transitive verb is normally in the same unmarked case as is the subject of an intransitive verb.

Some scholars carefully avoid calling this unmarked case 'nominative', often preferring the term ABSOLUTIVE. They do this, no doubt, because of a desire to emphasize the difference between this case and a typical I.E. nominative. I do not follow this practice. The Caucasian unmarked case, after all, has much in common with the I.E. nominative: it is the case of the intransitive subject, of the complement of a copula, of pure NOMINATION in citation forms, and, as we shall see, it can also, under certain conditions, function as transitive subject in Caucasian. Moreover, there is a practical advantage in using the term NOMINATIVE, namely that the letter N can operate unambiguously as the abbreviation for 'nominative', whereas A for 'absolutive' can lead to confusion with all those oblique

cases beginning with A, such as ACCUSATIVE, AGENTIVE, ABLATIVE, ALATIVE and AFFECTIVE.

5. Recent writers on ergativity have tended to emphasize the fact that in languages with an ergative construction, the subject of an intransitive verb and the object of a transitive verb are in the same case. Fillmore (1968), in his diagrammatic presentation of case-typologies (pp. 53, 54), clearly shows this kind of opposition of 'accusative' languages to 'ergative' languages, and Dixon (1972, p. 128) defines two basic syntactic language types:

> [1] NOMINATIVE-ACCUSATIVE LANGUAGES, in which S (intransitive subject) is syntactically identified with A (transitive subject); and
>
> [2] NOMINATIVE-ERGATIVE LANGUAGES, in which S is syntactically identified with O (transitive object).
>
> He further postulates (p. 129) the 'UNIVERSAL HYPOTHESIS' that: 'Each natural language is either strictly nominative-accusative, or strictly nominative-ergative in syntax.'

Various authors (e.g., Fillmore [1968, pp. 53-54], Dixon [1972, pp. 137-141, 149-150], Comrie [1973, p. 252]) use a variety of means – formulæ, trees and other diagrams — to indicate the similarities and differences between nominative-ergative and nominative-accusative languages. The following (adapted from Johnson, 1974, p. 79) is a clear and informative way of presenting a first approximation to the distinction between the major construction-types referred to here. Rather than using Dixon's 'S' and 'A', I use 'S' for both intransitive and transitive subjects, and superscript $^{N\ E\ A}$ to indicate 'nominative', 'ergative' and 'accusative' case, respectively.

[1] Nominative-Accusative type: transitive: S^N V O^A
intransitive: S^N V

[2] Nominative-Ergative type: transitive: S^E V O^N
intransitive: S^N V

5. In what follows we shall see that the facts of Caucasian languages do not support the hypothesis that every language must be exclusively of one or the other syntactic type. While it is true that Caucasian languages do have 'nominative-ergative' syntax in the sense that they have an ERGATIVE-TRANSITIVE construction, at the same time many, perhaps all, Caucasian languages also have some kind of NOMINATIVE-TRANSITIVE construction, in which the subject of a transitive verb is in the nominative case, the object being either in the same case or in the 'ergative' case. Caucasian languages thus have a nominative case which has all three functions: as INTRANSITIVE SUBJECT, TRANSITIVE OBJECT and also, in a different, semantically distinct construction, as TRANSITIVE SUBJECT. Clearly, then, although Caucasian languages do not generally have an accusative case, and thus cannot be called 'nominative-accusative' languages, nevertheless they contradict Dixon's universal hypothesis in the form in which it is finally expressed on page 129: 'In any language, the syntactic function in an intransitive construction(S) is syntactically identical with one and only one of the functions in a transitive construction (that is, either with A or with O).'

It appears that we must also reject Trubetzkoy's neat juxtaposition of ERGATIVE and ACCUSATIVE as the unique (and mutually exclusive) determinants of a transitive verb, since, first, in Caucasian languages transitive verbs can occur in the absence of BOTH these cases, and, secondly, in one Caucasian language, Udi, an ergative subject and an accusative object can co-occur in the same transitive sentence.

6. Discussion of ergativity has suffered a good deal from ambiguities or differences in the use of the terms SUBJECT and OBJECT. It is clearly impossible to talk about typological differences between nominative and ergative constructions, or to consider whether the ergative construction is a passive construction or not, unless one has some conception of 'subject' as a universal, or at least as a quasi-universal linguistic phenomenon. It is obvious that any attempt to define 'subject' in terms of

language-specific characteristics, such as surface case-form or verb-noun agreement, will fail the requirement of universality; so, too, will attempts to define 'subject' in semantic terms relating to the meanings of particular lexical verbs. Fillmore (1972), after citing the sentences The boy slapped the girl, The boy fell down, The boy received a blow, The boy has a toothache, The boy has blue eyes, says 'there appears to be no common notional property of "subjectness" which semantic descriptions of these sentences can exploit.' Clearly, he is thinking in terms of such concepts as AGENT, RECIPIENT, PATIENT, etc., which are closely related to the semantics of particular lexical verbs, and thus inevitably fail to capture the general meaning of 'subject' which one intuitively feels is common to all the examples cited. Keenan (1974) approaches the problem by suggesting that SUBJECTIVITY is a multi-factor concept: that there are a number of 'subject-properties' and that an element in sentence-structure is more, or less, subject-like according to the number of these properties it displays. My own view is that subjectivity is indeed a universal, or near-universal, and that it is related to the basic communicative function of predication. What I am calling SUBJECT is more or less the mediaeval suppositum, 'that which is set under' (upon which a predication is built), or the principium, 'commencement', of a predication, or in more modern terms, the GIVEN of which the predicate supplies new information. This corresponds approximately to one set of Keenan's properties, which I am inclined to posit as the chief, if not the only universal property of subjectivity. In Keenan's words, 'The major function of a subject NP is to specify the existence of an object, or set of objects, about which a predication is made.' It is important to establish some such universal definition of subject to avoid the errors induced by looking at Caucasian subjects through Indo-European eyes.

Incidentally, in addition to the one mentioned above, the items described as 'subjects' in my Caucasian examples

generally possess many others of Keenan's 'subject properties'.

7. The whole question of 'SUBJECTNESS' is further complicated by distinctions made between GRAMMATICAL and LOGICAL (and sometimes also PSYCHOLOGICAL and/or REAL) subjects.

In general, it is subjects of these latter kinds that are called 'actors', 'agents', 'patients', and so on. They are clearly related either to particular lexical verbs, or to actual participants in 'real-world', extra-linguistic situations. Such concepts are certainly not without interest or importance for linguistics. However, what I regard as the (quasi-) UNIVERSAL subject is a 'deep grammatical subject': that is, a subject defined in terms of its function in the deep (or abstract) grammatical process of PREDICATION. Obviously, the exponent of this deep predicational subject may at the same time be an 'agent' or 'patient' or whatever: it is a question of the level of abstraction upon which one regards it. One might say that sentences (or predications) have SUBJECTS; while specific lexical verbs have AGENTS, PATIENTS, etc.

Those scholars, like Uslar and Schuchardt, who interpreted the Caucasian ergative construction as 'really' passive, as well as those like Goląb (1969), who cannot accept subject as a universal, are apparently basing their views, overtly or covertly, upon superficial, language-specific, or lexical-verb-specific conceptions of subjectness.

8. The problem of defining OBJECT is analogous to that which we encounter with respect to subject. OBJECT, as a universal, cannot be defined in a superficial language-specific way, in terms of surface case-form or sequential position in relation to the verb: nor can it be defined in terms dependent on the semantics of particular lexical verbs. Object is one of the two terms that are linked by a 'two-place' verb — like <u>love</u> or <u>hit</u> or <u>see</u>; and since one of these terms is the subject, which has already been defined, the second term requires no further definition.

Grammatical transitivity is the (verbally expressed) relation between a subject (the 'given' or 'starting point') and a second term in the predication. The concept of unidirectional transivity has like-wise given rise to pseudo-problems which have their origin in a narrow concern with the meanings of particular lexical verbs. The literal-minded have a tendency to say: 'It is clear that in the sentence "John hit Bill" the action passes over from John to Bill, and hence the verb hit is transitive. But in "John saw Bill", Bill is the source of visual stimuli while John is the percipient of these; and in "John received a letter", John is clearly the recipient of the letter. In the two latter cases the event referred to by the verb passes over from the "object" onto the "subject", John. So how can these verbs be transitive?'

The answer is that GRAMMATICAL TRANSITIVITY has nothing to do with the directions in which events flow in the external world, but only with the direction of the ACT OF PREDICATION. Starting from the GIVEN (Subject) as the initial term, the predication proceeds through the verbally expressed relation to the ending-point, or second term, which is the object. It is the GRAMMATICAL ACT OF PREDICATION which flows, as it were, FROM the subject ACROSS TO the object: and, of course, this is true whatever the specific meaning of the particular transitive verb — and whatever the actual surface sequence of Verb, Subject and Object.

9. The concept of transitivity becomes more complex when we consider verbs involving secondary or more remote objects and subjects — that is, three-place verbs like give (which has an indirect object), or CAUSATIVES (which have indirect subjects). I cannot pursue these matters here except to mention one point. In English, we think of an INDIRECT OBJECT as the 'remoter object' of a three-place verb. It happens, however, that specialists in N.W. Caucasian languages recognize a class of TWO-PLACE verbs as taking an INDIRECT rather than a DIRECT object. The motivation for this distinction, which is intimately linked with erga-

tivity, will be made clear in 38 below. Meanwhile, in my initial listing of the types of sentence construction which occur in Caucasian languages, I ignore this particular distinction between the direct and so-called indirect objects of two-place verbs.

10. Having clarified what I intend to mean by 'subject' and 'object' in what follows, I can now go on to enumerate the various types of sentence construction which occur in Caucasian languages. The sequence SVO is arbitrarily used in these configurations: it should not be taken to mean that this is the only surface sequence of the elements of sentence structure in Caucasian languages. In fact all five N.W. Caucasian languages are rather strictly SOV languages (with occasional front-shifting of an O which is made thematic), the S. Caucasian languages seem to be mainly SVO, Nakh and Dagestan languages are mainly SOV, but many permit SVO rather freely, and at least one, Bezhti, appears to be almost exclusively SVO. Here, then are the principal configurations which occur in Caucasian languages:

A. Nominative Constructions:	Intransitive	1. S^N V
	Transitive	2. S^N V O^N
		3. S^N V O^E
		4. S^N V O^A
B. Ergative Constructions:	Intransitive	5. S^E V
	Transitive	6. S^E V O^N
		7. S^E V O^A

In all of these, S^E means 'subject in specific ergative case-form, or in the oblique case-form normally used in this function.' In many Caucasian languages the ergative case-form also functions as an instrumental or, less frequently, as a genitive, locative or dative. The very multiplicity of these dual functions (erg. + inst., erg. + gen., erg. + loc., etc.), as well as the existence of a totally distinct ergative case-form in about 10 Caucasian languages, demonstrates that the ergative case-function is a unique and independent one, not merely a secondary use of some particular other case. In other

words, there is no justification for saying (as some older writers have done, in effect), 'the ergative is "really" an instrumental"... etc.

In configurations numbers 4 and 7, I am on less certain ground in labelling the object O^A. Configuration 4 (S^N V O^A) applies to the South Caucasian languages (except the Laz dialect of Zan) in which transitive verbs in the so-called 'present' group of tenses have their objects in a case often called DATIVE-ACCUSATIVE. Configuration 7 (S^E V O^A) applies only to the Lezgian language Udi, which is unique among Caucasian languages in having an ergative-transitive construction with the object in an oblique case. This case-form, like the S. Caucasian one, functions also as a dative, and this point has been emphasized by those who wish to stress the ACCUSATIVELESS-NESS of the ergative construction. Whether one calls it dative or accusative is unimportant; the really interesting fact is that it is OBLIQUE. Udi unquestionably possesses an ergative-transitive construction in which the object is in an oblique case. The situation, however, is rather complex. According to Džeiranišvili (1971), the direct object of a transitive verb in Udi can be in either the NOMINATIVE or the DATIVE case — the latter sometimes being called 'accusative' when used in this function. Džeiranišvili (incidently, a native speaker of Udi) points out that there is a belief (which he correctly attributes to Schuchardt [1896], but see also Dirr [1928], 334) that the nominative expresses an indefinite object and the dative a definite object. This is an oversimplification. In fact, the distribution of the dative and nominative object is related to the sequence of object and verb, and this in turn is related to definiteness. As Džeiranišvili explains it, there are two possible sequences: (i) $S^E O^D$ V, in which the object precedes the verb and is obligatorily in the dative (accusative) case, and definite ('concrete' and previously mentioned) and (ii) S^EV $O^{D/N}$, in which the object follows the verb and is optionally in the dative or nominative case. In this latter configuration, he says, 'the function of the two cases cannot be differentiated —

the form of the direct object does not necessarily express definiteness or indefiniteness.'

In configuration number 3 (S^N V O^E), the case-form of the object is precisely that of the ergative in the languages in which it occurs and it is called 'ergative' in the specialist literature, although O is, of course, an unusual function for the ergative case-form.

Configuration number 5 (S^E V) also calls for comment. This ergative-intransitive construction occurs in four different circumstances, two of them relatively trivial. The relatively trivial circumstances are (i) by deletion of the object of an S^E V O^N, which naturally leaves S^E V, (ii) in Dargi, and probably other languages, by fusion of O with V in an historically former S^E O V construction. The more interesting cases are the restricted occurrence of S^E with certain intransitive verbs in Georgian, and in one of the Nakh languages, namely Batsbiy. In the latter language a first- or second- person subject of an intransitive verb can be in the ergative case (i) obligatorily, with certain 'verbs of action' (as in Georgian) and (ii) optionally (and hence in meaningful contrast with a nominative subject) with another small set of verbs. I will have more to say on these occurrences of S^E V in 20 and 21 below.

11. The basic function of subject, as I pointed out in 6 and 7 above, is the 'deep' one of representing the starting point or 'given' of a predication, a function which is quite independent of the semantics of particular lexical verbs. This function, no doubt, controls the selection of subjects in Caucasian, as in other languages. However, once the subject has been identified on these 'deep' predicational grounds, the rule assigning a particular surface case-form to it is sensitive to the semantic class of the particular verb to which it is related. The normal, or unmarked, case-form for the transitive subject in Caucasian languages is ERGATIVE; but in the Nakh and Dagestan languages a different case is assigned when the verb belongs to certain small semantic sub-classes. In general, verbs of FEELING (e.g. <u>love</u>) and

PERCEPTION (e.g. see) require the subject to be in a specific oblique case, often DATIVE (D) but sometimes a LOCATIVE case (L): an exception is the Nidž dialect of Udi in which verba sentiendi have their subject in the same ergative case as other verbs. In a number of Dagestanian languages there is a special case-form, called the AFFECTIVE (Af), which has the unique function of marking the subject of verba sentiendi. An affective case-form is found in all but one (Botlikh) of the eight Andi languages (in Karati and Akhwakh only in some dialects). It is also found in one Lezgian language, Tsakhur. In some languages, the GENITIVE (G) marks the subject of 'verbs of possession'. In at least three Lezgian languages, Tabasaran, Aghul and Tsakhur, the verb meaning 'to be able' requires the subject to be in an ABLATIVE (Ab) case, while in a third, Krytz, the corresponding verb takes the COMPARATIVE (Cp) case. We must thus add to our list of Caucasian transitive constructions the configurations: 8. S^{D} V O, 9. S^{L} V O, 10. S^{Af} V O, 11. S^{G} V O, 12. S^{Ab} V O, 13. S^{Cp} V O. Normally in all these configurations, the O is in the nominative case. I have not written O^{N}, however, because a few verbs in some languages require the O to be in a locative or other case.

Given the fact that we are here dealing with languages in which it is the Subject, rather than the Object, of a transitive verb that is in an oblique case, it is not surprising that there should be some variation in the specific oblique case used, according to the semantic sub-class of the lexical verb. This is quite analogous to the familiar situation in Latin, where, besides the normal, or unmarked accusative object, we have objects in the genitive, dative, and ablative, with particular classes of verbs.

12. One final remark on the case-form of transitive subjects in Caucasian: it has sometimes been suggested that besides the nominative and ergative constructions there is also an 'indefinite' construction — so called because there is no surface indication of whether the subject is in the nominative or ergative case. This occurs, for instance, with first- and second- person

subjects in Georgian (and with proper names as well in Old Georgian) (Chikobava, 1948). As a matter of fact, in pronouns of the first and second person, there are no distinct nominative and ergative forms in all the Kartvelian languages, in the five Abkhazo-Adyghe (N.W. Caucasian) languages and in ten Dagestanian languages, i.e., in nearly 50% of all Caucasian languages. But since the distinction is regularly made with THIRD person subjects, and since in most of these languages the distinction between the nominative and ergative constructions is also marked elsewhere (e.g. by the verb form), there seems to be no reason to set up an additional type of 'indefinite' sentence-construction merely to accomodate those cases where the surface distinction of nominative and ergative is neutralized.

13. The principal "symptoms" which normally distinguish the ergative transitive construction from the nominative intransitive construction can be tabulated as follows:

	ERGATIVE TRANSITIVE CONSTRUCTION	NOMINATIVE INTRANSITIVE CONSTRUCTION
1. Case of Subject:	ergative	nominative
2. Case of Object:	nominative	———
3. Verb agrees with:	object or subj. and obj.	subject

4. In addition to these symptoms, in N.W. Caucasian only, the ergative construction is characterized by the sequence and form of pronominal prefixes on the verb.

Incidentally, Udi, which is anomalous with respect to symptom 2 (since it can have the ergative object in the accusative/dative case), is also anomalous with respect to 3, since in Udi the transitive verb in the ergative construction agrees only with its SUBJECT (in person and number). It is tempting to assume that Udi, spoken chiefly in northern Azerbaijan, has been influenced by the Turkic Azeri language: such areal or symbiotic effects are not uncommon in the multilingual Caucasus. However, as Klimov (1973) points out, there are reasons for believing that this is an internal development in Udi.

14. The following examples, from Adyghe, Avar and Tsakhur, illustrate the case-forms of nouns in the ergative construction. In the word-for-word translations, superscript I indicates INSTRUMENTAL CASE: from now on, in each particular example, the translation is carried down from word-rank to morpheme-rank only for those morphemes which are relevant to the discussion of the moment. The first examples, of a typical ergative sentence followed by a nominative one, are (1) The hunter killed the wolf and (2) The wolf died.

(1) Adyghe: ʃakʷ'e-m tɨʁʷɨẑɨ-r ɨwɨk'ɨʁ.
Avar: tʃanaqan-as bats' tʃ'wana.
Tsakhur: avtʃe-e dʒanavar tʃɨvk'una.
hunter^{E} wolf^{N} killed.

(2) Adyghe: tɨʁʷɨẑɨ-r ɬ'aʁe.
Avar: bats' χwana.
Tsakhur: dʒanavar qɨvk'una.
wolf^{N} died.

In (1) the transitive subject is in an ergative case form, while the object is in the nominative, which is, of course, the same form as that of the subject in (2). The nominative form is the bare-base form in Avar and Tsakhur. In Adyghe, the expression of the cases is combined with the marking of definiteness: the suffix -m in (1) and -r in (1) and (2) is a kind of postponed definite article which at the same time indicates the OBLIQUE (ergative) and the NOMINATIVE case.

The next examples illustrate some of the changes of case undergone by nouns in Avar and Tsakhur when their role in the sentence is changed. The sentences are (3) The door opened, (4) The boy opened the door with the key, (5) The key opened the door, (6) The boy used the key to open the door.

(3) Av. nutss'a rahana. (4) wasas nutss'a k'ulaɬ rahana.
Ts. akka aqɨjn. boy^{E} door^{N} key^{I} opened.
door^{N} opened. (4) gadee akka aqɨjn mɨk'ejka.
boy^{E} door^{N} opened key^{I}

(5) Av. k'ulaɬ nutss'a rahana.
Ts. mik'ejn akka aqɬjn.
key^{E} door^{I} opened.

(6) Av. wasas nutss'a rahine k'ul ħalt'ana.
Ts. gadee akka aqasdime mik'ej iʃʃemiʃijn.
boy^{E} door^{N} to-open key^{N} used

15. It will be noted that in these examples the word door is always in the same case. On the other hand, the word for key occurs in three different cases: in (4) it is in the instrumental, in (5) as subject of a transitive verb it is in the ergative (in Avar, but not in Tsakhur, this has outwardly the same form as the instrumental), in (6) it has become object of the verb to use and consequently is in the nominative. These changes in the form of the word key reflect changes in the word's grammatical function, and these take precedence over any imagined constant, unchanging, 'deep structure' meaning of key in (4), (5) and (6). In an actual situation, where a boy opens a door with a key, there are three participants in the event out there in the real world: and, of course, no matter how one TALKS about it, the key always remains the instrument in the real-world event. But that event, as an interplay of real participants in the external world, cannot be called (as some would have it) the "deep structure" of any linguistic utterance. The external event as such has no LINGUISTIC structure at all, deep or otherwise. It is only when a speaker conceptualizes the situation for the purpose of linguistic encoding that some kind of linguistic structure may be said to be imposed upon the event. If the speaker chooses to conceptualize and grammaticalize the event in such a way that the key plays the rôle of instrument, then, in a Dagestanian language, the corresponding word will surface in the INSTRUMENTAL case (4). If, however, he chooses to conceptualize differently, making the key the starting point, the subject, of his predication, then the word for key will surface in the ERGATIVE case (5). Yet another conceptualization (the boy used the key...) brings the word for key into the function of object, represented by the NOMINATIVE case (6).

16. It has been pointed out that in the Tsakhur version of (5), the word key is in the ergative case, and hence different in form from its occurrence in the instrumental in (4). This is true, but, even so, the Tsakhur ergative form is not a unique and independent one: the form mik'ejn, in fact, can also function as a genitive. And the ergative of gade 'boy', i.e. gadee (with long final e), is the same as the first locative, or INESSIVE form. In Tsakhur there are thus two types of ergative form, one of these (= inessive) is used with singular nouns of classes I and II (human male and female), while the other (= genitive) is used with singular nouns of Classes III and IV (animals and all other things). This illustrates once again the point made in 10 above, that even when it has no independent surface form, the ergative case-function is unique and independent and cannot be said to be merely a facet of some one particular other case. Bokarëv (1948) has pointed out that generally where the ergative case has the same form as the instrumental, there is another instrumental case-form in the language that has become the more usual means of expressing the instrumental function. In Tsakhur something similar has happened with the inessive used as ergative with class I and II nouns. Kurbanov (1967) shows that since the inessive normally has the ergative function, the original inessive function is usually fulfilled by using a postposition ad 'in' with the geritive case. He cites the examples (7) The boy this year read many books, where 'boy' gade-e is in the old inessive = ergative, and (8) They found a nail in the boy in which the postposition is used:

(7) gadee hajni sen χaʕtta kitabbi qaʕtqiʕ.
boy^{E} this year many books^{N} read.

(8) gadejni ad qqadaχ uwajki.
boy^{G} in nail^{N} they-found.

17. The placing of the subject of an ergative transitive verb in the ergative case is universal in Caucasian languages, except for the two western N.W. Caucasian languages Abkhaz and Abaza. These two languages have no surface case-forms at all, and con-

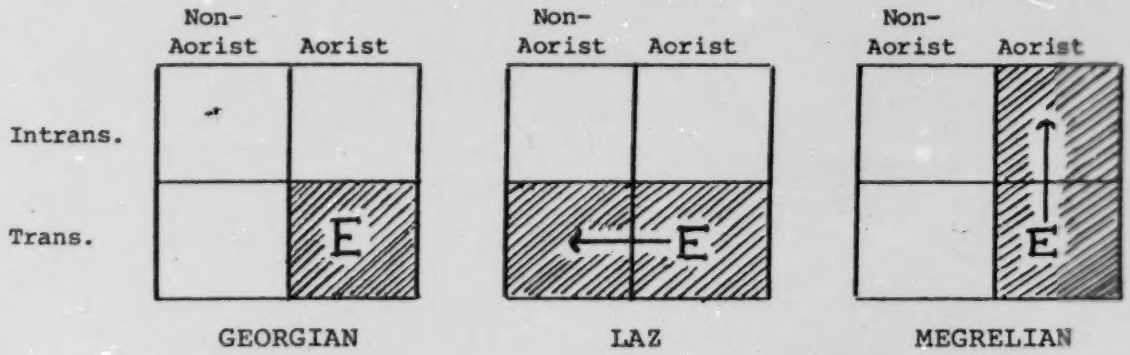
sequently ergative subject nouns cannot be marked for ergative case. Nevertheless, Abkhaz and Abaza certainly distinguish an ergative construction. How this is done is shown below.

18. The Kartvelian (S. Caucasian) languages Georgian and Svan are anomalous in that in these two languages the ergative construction is confined to a group of tenses of the AORIST (perfective) series. In these tenses the subject is in the ergative case (uniquely marked in Georgian by the suffix -ma(n) or -m which has no other function) and the object is in the nominative. In the PRESENT series of tenses (which includes a past imperfective), the subject of a transitive verb is in the nominative and the object is in the dative-accusative. Examples: (9) The mother is bringing up her child, (10) The mother brought up her child.

(9) deda ʃvilsa zrdis.
mother^{N} son$^{D/A}$ brings-up.

(10) deda-m ʃvili gazarda.
mother^{E} son^{N} brought-up.

In the two Zan dialects, Laz (or Chan) and Megrelian, the ergative construction has been generalized — has spread beyond its use with aorist transitives only. This generalization has taken different directions in the two dialects, as indicated in these diagrams. In Georgian, the ergative construction E occurs only with transitive verbs in the aorist, thus:



In Laz, the ergative case has come to be used with the subjects of all transitive verbs, irrespective of tense. Laz has thus

acquired the same generalized type of ergativity as other Caucasian languages. *In Megrelian, on the other hand, the ergative* case is still confined to the aorist tenses, but has spread from transitive to intransitive sentences. Since the so-called ergative case is no longer associated at all with transitivity, it has ceased to be functionally an ergative altogether, and has become merely a kind of redundant marker of the aorist. Thus in Megrelian we have examples like (11) The girl sewed a pillow (transitive) and (12) A letter came for the brother (intransitive) in both of which the subject is marked by the formerly ergative marker -k:

(11) dotʃ'u dzʁabi-k baliʃi.
sewed girl^{E} pillow^{N}.

(12) barati-k kumurtu dʒima-s.
letter^{E} came brother^{D}.

Klimov (1967), apparently following Chikobava, suggests that the ergative suffix -k lost its function as a result of the frequent occurrence in Megrelian of the 'affirmative' prefix ko- (ku-, ki-, kə-) on aorist verbs, as in (13) The brother came:

(13) dʒima komortu.
brother^{N} came.

in which the initial k- of komortu got transferred to the end of dʒima, forming dʒimak, which came to be appreciated as an ergative. This may partly explain the Megrelian development. But on a deeper level it may be no accident that Megrelian is spoken on, and contiguous to, the territory of Abkhaz, a language which has no surface cases and consequently has no indication of ergativity on the subject noun. Abkhaz marks ergativity on the verb, and so retains the ergative function. Megrelian, however, having lost the case-mark on the noun has totally lost the ergative function.

19. In 10, above, I mentioned the occurence of S^{E} V, that is, an intransitive, or apparently intransitive, verb with an ergative subject. This configuration occurs, as I said there, in four circumstances. The first is the deletion of the object in an S^{E} V O^{N} construction. This will be illustrated in another connection be-

low (33). The second circumstance was the fusion of an historical O with V. This is what Abdullaev in his Dargi Syntax (1971) calls the 'binary ergative construction' since it involves only two elements, S and V. It occurs, as he says, with 'historically transitive' verbs. These are verbs, now intransitive in appearance, resulting from the fusion of such formerly object nouns as q'as 'decision', guz 'force, pressure', han 'patience, self-control', ħer 'look, glance' with such verbs as bares 'to do', es 'to say', butes 'to hold'. We thus have such S^E V constructions as:

(14) nu-ni q'asbarra. (< bares)
I^E decided.

(15) nu-ni guzbarra.
I^E showed-force.

(16) nu-ni handutsiri (< butses)
thou^E endured.

(17) ħu-ni ħer'iri (< ħer + es)
thou^E looked.

It is probable that a similar phenomenon occurs in several Caucasian languages. Jakovlev (1940a), for example, gives a few examples of Chechen intransitive, or apparently objectless, verbs that require ergative subjects. He explains these as resulting from the fusion of noun-objects with originally separate transitive verbs, as in Dargi, and he identifies the incorporated noun-roots.

20. Other cases of S^E V, that is, intransitive verbs with ergative subjects, cannot be plausibly 'explained away' in this manner. According to Klimov (1973, 235-8), at least a few examples of S^E V can be found in all the Kartvelian languages, in Kabardian, in Batsbiy and in Lezgi. In Georgian, intransitive verbs of this type are called MIDDLE VERBS, and include verbs meaning 'go', 'run', 'jump', 'live', 'shout', 'cry', 'serve', all of which require their subject to be in the ergative case in the aorist group of tenses. Rudenko (1972), following Georgian pedagogical tradition, explains this anomalous

use of the ergative case by saying that these verbs have 'objects understood'. The suggestion that we must assume missing objects such as 'way', 'jump', 'life' ('go a way', 'jump a jump','live a life') with these verbs seems extremely implausible to me, particularly since no trace of 'fused objects' (as in the Dargi examples) is present. It seems more likely that, as Klimov (1973, p. 51) suggests, we have here survivals of an 'active' type of sentence construction.

This last explanation seems even more appropriate to the cases of S^E V that occur in Batsbiy. In this language, some intransitive verbs require a subject in the first or second person to be in the ergative case. Desheriev (1953) describes these as 'so-called dynamic verbs'. They include such obviously 'action' verbs as 'go', 'run', 'return', 'jump', 'play', 'stand up', 'sit down' and also 'speak', 'cry', 'bellow', 'look', 'grow fat', 'believe'. I give here some examples of I and thou in the nominative case with the verb to be (18, 19) and then, in the ergative case with 'dynamic verbs' (20, 21, 22). In (18), Cp means 'comparative case' and in (19) In2 means 'inessive II' : (18) I am older than you (sing.) (19) You (sing.) are at home.

(18) so ħoχ q'anivχ va.
I^{N} thee^{Cp} older am.

(19) ħo tʃuħ va.
thou^{N} house^{In2} art.

In (20) C means 'comitative' and in (21) In1 means 'innessive I'. (20) I'm going to school with father. (21) I'm talking about twenty people. (22) You played there just now.

(20) as vuit'as dadetsi sk'ole.
I^{E} go father^{C} school.

(21) as t'q'a st'ak'oχ livas.
I^{E} 20 persons^{In1} talk.

(22) aħ ints laip'ts'naħ osi.
thou^{E} just-now played there.

This phenomenon — the occurrence of S^E with 'dynamic' or 'active' intransitive verbs — is not to be equated with the use of a 'pseudo-ergative' subject with all intransitive verbs in the aorist tenses in Megrelian, mentioned in 18 above. The Batsbiy phenomenon occurs in all tenses and is linked with a particular 'active' semantic class of verbs, and is thus somewhat reminiscent of the 'active construction' that occurs in a number of Amerindian languages. Note, however, that the Batsbiy phenomenon is confined to subjects in the first and second person only.

21. Batsbiy has yet another use of an ergative subject with intransitive verbs that is even more interesting, since with these particular verbs the subject can be in either the ergative or the nominative case. Selection of the case is semantically conditioned, though Desheriev tells us (1953, p. 227) that the distinction is now going out of use. The intransitive ergative-or-nominative verbs listed by Desheriev are: 'to worry, be bored', 'be satiated', 'fear', 'lie down', 'fall down', 'get drunk'. He also mentions another verb dozar 'fall' cited by Schiefner in 1856, but apparently no longer entering into the ergative-nominative alternation. The semantic distinction is this: the NOMINATIVE subject is more 'passive', is represented as activated or affected by some external event, whereas the ERGATIVE subject is more 'active', is represented as actively causing the event named by the verb. Examples of the nominative subject are: (23) My mother is ill, I'm worried, (24) It's raining, I'm bored, (25) We fell to the ground (unintentionally).

(23) se nan laits'oli, so kottol.
my mother^N fell-ill, I^N am-worried.

(24) q'ar jatχe, so kottol.
rain^N comes, I^N am-bored.

(25) tχo naizdraχ qitra.
we^N to-the-ground fell (unintentionally).

Examples of the ergative subject are: (26) I'm bored/worried,

I don't know why. (27) We fell to the ground (intentionally).

(26) as kottlas, tso χeɛ stev.
I[E] am-bored, not know why.

(27) atχo naldraχ qitra.
we[E] to-the-ground fell (intentionally).

It is clear that in (23) to (25) the worry, boredom and act of falling down came upon the subject from outside, while in (26) the explanatory clause I don't know why implies that the boredom was spontaneously generated in the subject. We must remember that this unusual Batsbiy usage applies only to first and second person subjects, and only to a restricted set of intransitive verbs.

22. The third symptom of ergativity mentioned in 12 was the concord or 'agreement' of the verb. In all except two out of the thirty seven Caucasian languages there is, or may be, some form of concord relation between a verb and its subject and/or object. The general pattern is that an intransitive verb agrees with its SUBJECT (as in Indo-European), but an ergative transitive verb agrees with its OBJECT. In some Caucasian languages, an ergative transitive verb agrees, in principle, with both the subject and object. Agreement is in CLASS or PERSON or both.

In the majority of Caucasian languages (to be exact, in 28 out of 37, or 75%), nouns are distributed into a number of gender-like classes, ranging from two in Tabasaran up to eight in Batsbiy. In a very few lexical items, the noun-class is overtly marked on the noun itself — Avar, for instance, has was 'boy', jas 'girl', watss 'brother', jatss 'sister', where w- and j- are markers of 'male person' and 'female person' respectively. Generally, the classes are covert, being manifested only by the occurrence of the appropriate class-marker on adjectives, verbs, etc., in concord relationship with the noun.

23. The commonest rules of verb-noun agreement can be simply illustrated from Avar, which, in addition to the 'male person' and 'female person' classes already mentioned, has a third class of 'non-persons'. We may label these classes m., f. and n. re-

spectively. Plurals constitute, in effect, a fourth concord-class. The classes are marked by class consonants, which are prefixed, suffixed or infixed. The class consonants are:

	SING.	PLURAL
m.	w	
f.	j	l/r
n.	b	

The general class-concord rule is that an INTRANSITIVE verb agrees with its SUBJECT, an ERGATIVE TRANSITIVE verb with its OBJECT. Thus we have (28) The boy/girl/horse came.

(28) m-boy^{N} was w-atʃ'ana m-came.
f-girl^{N} jas j-atʃ'ana f-came.
n-horse^{N} ɬʃu b-atʃ'ana n-came.

As ergative examples we have (29) Muslimat gave birth to a boy, (30) Muslimat gave birth to a girl, (31) Muslimat gave birth to a child — note that for grammatical purposes, a child is a 'non-person'.

(29) muslimatitsa was ha-w-una.
M.^{E} boy^{N} bore (m).

(30) muslimatitsa jas ha-j-una.
M.^{E} girl^{N} bore (f).

(31) muslimatitsa ɬimer ha-b-una.
M.^{E} child^{N} bore (n).

27. A few languages of Dagestan have elaborated the ergative concord system so that the transitive verb agrees with the OBJECT in CLASS, but with the SUBJECT in PERSON. This occurs, for instance, in Tabasaran. Tabasaran has two classes, HUMAN (h) marked by d- and NON-HUMAN (n) marked by b-, as in these examples: I, thou, he caught the boy, (33) I, thou, he caught the bird.

(32) izu d-isnu-za baj I h-caught-I
iwu d-isnu-wa baj Thou h-caught-thou } boy^{N}.
duɮu d-isnuw baj He h-caught

(33) izu b-isnu-za dʒaq'a I n-caught-I
iwu b-isnu-wa dʒaq'a Thou n-caught-thou } bird^{N}.
duʁu b-isnuw dʒaq'a He n-caught

A somewhat similar concord system, with the transitive verb agreeing with its object in class and its subject in person, occurs in Dargi and Lak, though there are variations. In Lak, for instance, subject-person concord occurs only with first and second person subjects. In those southern dialects of Tabasaran where the class system is lost completely, the ergative transitive verb agrees only with the subject, in person. Thus in one of these dialects, examples (32) and (33) appear as:

(32) uzu bisura-za
uwu bisura-wa } baʒ.
duʁu bisura

(33) uzu bisura-za
uwu bisura-wa } dʒaq'^{w}.
duʁu bisura

As we mentioned earlier, this has also happened in Udi, which has totally lost the class-system and thus has a purely SUBJECT-PERSON conjugation of the transitive verb. Two other Lezgian languages that have lost the class-system entirely are Lezgi and Agul. In these languages, however, there is no person concord either, so the Lezgi and Agul verb, both intransitive and transitive, marks no agreement whatsoever with related nouns.

28. In the Kartvelian (S. Caucasian) languages, verb-noun concord is purely personal. Intransitive verbs agree in person and number with the subject, and with the indirect object if any, while transitive verbs agree with both direct object and subject. The same is true of the Abkhazo-Adyghe languages (NWC), with the addition that there is some marking of CLASS agreement in Abkhaz and Abaza.

29. In the Abkhazo-Adyghe (NWC) languages, all NP's related to the verb are, in principle, recapitulated in pronominal prefixes

on the verb, and the SEQUENCE of these prefixes is crucially related to ergativity. In ERGATIVE sentences the pronominal prefixes are in the sequence O-S-V or O-o-S-V, where lower case o represents indirect object or other compliment. Examples from Adyghe are: (34) I took thee, (35) I took thee with them.

(34) se we wɨ-s-ɕaʁ.
I thee thee-I-took.
S^E O^N O - S - V

(35) se axem we w-a-de-s-ɕaʁ.
I^E them thee thee-them-with-I-took.
S^E o^E O^N O - o- with - S-V

When subject and object are both third person, the only overt pronominal prefix on the Adyghe ergative verb represents the subject, thus (36) The man took/led the horse.

(36) ɬ'ɨ-m ʃɨ-r ɨ-ɕaʁ.
the-man the-horse he-led.
S^E O^N S-V.

In NOMINATIVE sentences, which in Adyghe have the subject in the nominative case and the object (here called the 'indirect object' by N.W. Caucasian specialists) in the ERGATIVE (oblique) case, the pronominal prefixes on the verb are in the sequence S-o-V or S-o-o-V, as in (37) I awaited thee, (38) I awaited thee with them.

(37) se we sɨ— we— ʒaʁ.
I thee I-thee-awaited.
S^N o^E S - O - V

(38) se axem we s— a— dɨ— we— ʒaʁ.
I them thee I - them-with -thee-awaited.
S^N o^E O^E S - o - with - O - V

When the subject and object are both third person, the only overt prefix on the Adyghe nominative verb represents the object, thus: (39) The man waited for the horse.

(39) ɬ'ɨ-r ʃɨ-m je-ʒaʁ.
the-man the-horse it-awaited
S^N O^E O - V

In Abkhaz and Abaza, where nouns have no surface case-marking, the difference between the ergative and the nominative construction is expressed solely by the sequence, and, to some extent, the form of the pronominal prefixes, as in (40) They took the boy home (ergative), (41) The boy helps his mother (nominative), (42) My sister gave me the book (ergative 3-place verb).

(40) atʃ'k^W'ɨn aɥnɨq'a dɨ-r-gejt'.
the-boy home him-they-took.
O Adv.Compl. O - S —— V

(41) atʃ'k^W'ɨn j-an d-lɨ-tsχraawejt'.
the-boy his-mother he-her-helps.
S O S - o —— V

(42) sa-ɲ^{W}ɕa aɕ^{W}q'^{W} j-sɨ-l-tejt'.
my-sister the-book it-me-she-gave.
S O O-o - S—— V

30. To summarize, then, the ergative-transitive construction in Caucasian languages is characterized by ONE OR MORE of the following features:

(i) the subject is in the ergative case
(ii) the object is in the nominative case
(iii) the verb 'agrees' with the object
(iv) in North West Caucasian, the pronominal prefixes on the verb are in the sequence O-S-.

A number of scholars, but notably Meščaninov in several works and, following him, Goląb (1969), have noted that 'ergative languages' can be classified in terms of their different manifestations of ergativity. Specifically, the criterion is which element of sentence structure, the Subject or the Verb, carries the marker(s) of ergativity. We thus have three types:

(i) NOMINAL, in which the ergative construction is marked only by the case-form of the subject,

(ii) VERBAL, in which the ergative construction is marked only by some feature of the Verb, particularly markers of concord with the Object, and

(iii) MIXED, in which both the Subject and Verb carry ergative markers.

By these criteria, most Caucasian languages are, potentially, of MIXED type. The two western Abkhazo-Adyghe languages, Abkhaz and Abaza, are of purely VERBAL type. Two Lezgian languages, Lezgi and Agul, are of purely NOMINAL type, since the verb in these languages carries no concord markers whatsoever. Another Lezgian language, Udi, as well as the southern dialect of Tabasaran, must also be assigned to the NOMINAL type, since the verb in these languages marks person-agreement with the Subject only, and this is not a mark of ergativity.

This classification of ergativity is interesting, but not, it seems to me, of great typological significance. We have seen how more than one type exists even within one and the same subgroup of Caucasian. Not only that, but even in those Dagestanian languages that have retained a system of noun-classes, by no means all verbs carry class-markers. Xajdakov (1966, pp. 126,152) mentions that in Lak, for instance, out of 208 simple verbs, only 77 (that is, 37%) carry class-markers. Consequently, even in those languages that are of MIXED type, a large percentage of ergative sentences are, in fact, of NOMINAL type. This is why we said above that most Caucasian languages are 'potentially' of MIXED type.

31. I would like now to consider the once widespread interpretation of the ergative construction as passive. This was the conclusion of Uslar (1862, 1863) whose works I unfortunately know chiefly through the frequent references to them in the Soviet Caucasiological literature — a conclusion much strengthened and popularized by Schuchardt (1896).

One can easily understand how a scholar familiar with Indo-European might interpret Avar sentences like those in examples

(1) and (4) above as passive. Here we have a verb syntactically related to two nouns. The verb 'agrees' with one noun, and that noun is in the 'nominative' case. The other noun is in the instrumental. 'Obviously' (from an I.E. point of view) the noun which is in the nominative, and with which the verb agrees, must be the subject. Thus, an Avar sentence like, say (43) Father bought a horse,

(43) insutsa tʃu b-osana.
father$^{E/I}$ n-horse^{N} n-bought.

must (in I.E. terms) 'really' mean 'By father a horse was bought.' If the first Caucasian language studied by Uslar had been, say, Udi, with its verb-subject agreement and oblique-case object, Caucasian studies might not have been so persistently encumbered by the 'ergative = passive' myth. The belief that the Caucasian ergative construction is passive has for long been rejected by Soviet Caucasiologists. Already in Byxovskaja (1934), doubt was cast on the passive nature of the ergative, and Zhirkov (1941, pp. 64-65) argues convincingly against the passive hypothesis.

32. There are several arguments against the 'passive' interpretation of the ergative construction, the first two of which are well-known.

The first argument applies only to the Kartvelian languages. In these languages there is a genuine passive construction that is in direct opposition to the ergative. Thus in Georgian we have (44) The man killed the ox, and (45) The ox was killed by the man.

(44) k'atsman dak'la χari.
man^{E} killed ox^{N}.

(45) χari daik'la k'atsisa-gan.
ox^{N} was-killed man-from.

Since Georgian can oppose a formal passive to the ergative construction, it is obvious that the latter cannot itself be passive.

The second argument is, in a sense, the obverse of the first.

In all the other Caucasian languages, there is no contrasting ACTIVE to which the ergative can be opposed. It is widely agreed that the passive construction, universally, is a transformationally derived construction: on this, see in general the Soviet symposium The Typology of Passive Constructions (Xolodovič, ed. 1974) and in particular Xrakovskij's contribution to that volume. Since the Caucasian ergative construction cannot be shown to derive from, nor be opposed to, a basic 'active' construction, it cannot be regarded as passive.

These two are the commonly adduced arguments for the non-passive (and, by the same token, in North Caucasian languages, non-active, i.e., neutral) nature of the Caucasian ergative construction. One can, however, think of a few other arguments against the 'ergative = passive' hypothesis.

33. The labelling of the ergative construction as 'passive' inescapably implies that one has equated the subject of the ergative with the agent of the passive, and the object of the ergative with the subject of the passive. Now, in at least some modern I.E. languages, and perhaps in most, one formal characteristic of the passive is that the AGENT can easily be deleted (it happens most of the time in English), but that the SUBJECT cannot be deleted, except in quite unusual circumstances. In the Caucasian ergative construction, however, either the subject (= passive agent) or the object (= passive subject) can be freely deleted. Thus in Avar, from sentence (46) Mother is cooking the potatoes = The potatoes are being cooked by mother, we can derive either (47) The potatoes are cooking = The potatoes are being cooked or (48) Mother is cooking = *Are being cooked by mother.

(46) ebelaɬ karto∫ka q'at∫'ule-b b-ugo.
mother^{E} potatoes^{N} cooking-n n-is.

(47) karto∫ka q'at∫'ule-b b-ugo
potatoes^{N} cooking-n n-is.

(48) ebelaɬ q'at∫'ule-b b-ugo
mother^{E} cooking-n n-is.

Sentence (48), of course, avoids the macabre ambiguity of English Mother is cooking because of both the ergative case of mother and the non-human class-markers on the verb, which recall the deleted potatoes. Incidentally, although 'are cooking' or 'are being cooked' are appropriate translation equivalents in these sentences, a more literal rendering of the Avar verb q 'at∫'aze is 'to prepare'.

Another argument has to do with the relative frequency of passives and ergatives. In languages which have a formally distinct passive, it tends to be infrequent. In ordinary conversational English, for example, about 1.5% of all finite verbs are passive: of these, only a very small fraction are accompanied by an explicit agent. At a generous estimate we can be certain that not more than .2% (or 1 in 500) of all English finite verbs in conversation are passives with undeleted agents. At a conservative estimate, based on some rough counts, at least 20% (or 1 in 5) of Caucasian finite verbs are in the ergative construction. Now if the equation of ERGATIVE with PASSIVE is more than a mere labelling of surface forms, it must be the case that ergative and passive constructions are semantically equivalent — are relatable, that is, to approximately the same situational (psychological, stylistical) features. The onus, then, lies upon the supporters of the ergative = passive hypothesis to explain why the situational features which prompt a speaker to select PASSIVE are at least 100 times more frequent in the Caucasus than in the English-speaking world.

Finally, some weight must be given to the insight and intuitions of the many Soviet linguists who are native speakers of Caucasian languages. Caucasian-speaking linguists are virtually unanimous in denying that the Caucasian ergative construction is passive: and these, it must be remembered, are linguistically sophisticated observers with thorough acquaintance with the passive in Russian and other Indo-European languages.

34. Some writers, such as Kuryłowicz (1963) and Shaumjan (1974) regard the ergative and passive constructions as being FORMALLY

identical, but differing 'stylistically'. Thus, Shaumjan, having defined THEME as 'that which is spoken about' (p. 55) and RHEME as 'that which is communicated about the theme', states (p.57), 'The difference between the nominative and the ergative construction consists in the fact that from the point of view of the distinction between theme and rheme these two constructions are in reversed relation to each other: in the nominative construction the agens functions as theme, while the patiens enters into the composition of the rheme; in the ergative construction, on the contrary, the patiens functions as theme, while the agens enters into the composition of the theme.' He goes on to say: 'In the nominative construction the agens is expressed by the nominative case ... while in the ergative construction the agens is expressed by the ergative case....' In making these distinctions, Shaumjan seems to have assigned the terms 'theme' and 'rheme' quite arbitrarily, or rather, one may perhaps guess that he is ultimately, covertly, influenced by the Indo-European idea that the unmarked, or nominative, form must be the subject or 'theme'. Shaumjan then goes on to point out that the (Russian) passive construction is exactly the same with respect to the relations between 'theme' and 'agens', etc., as the ergative construction. But the passive differs from the ergative by the fact that the passive is 'stylistically marked' in comparison with the active, while the ergative is not so marked.

35. Martinet has discussed ergativity in several publications, mostly with reference to Basque but with implications of a more general relevance. A brief outline in English of his views is found in Martinet (1970). Like others, Martinet emphasizes the neutrality of the verb in the ergative construction: it is neither active nor passive, and he likens it in this respect to nominalized verbal forms in English. Regamey (1954) also likens the verb in ergative constructions to Indo-European nominals derived from verbs. Rejecting the 'passive' interpretation, Regamy sees the ergative construction in what he calls 'concentric languages' (notably Tibetan) as a sentence structure that is not

based on the two 'poles' SUBJECT and PREDICATE, but rather on a single pivot —— 'un verbe nominal pourvu de prédicat d'existence.'

36. It will be apparent from what precedes that most writers on ergativity seem to concentrate their attention on the ergative construction in itself, as if it were a unique and independent phenomenon; an obligatory pecularity of transitive sentences. But one must not forget the famous, and still valid, dictum of de Saussure that 'la langue est un système dont les termes sont solidaires. et où la valeur de l'un ne résulte que de la présence simultanée des autres.' It is impossible to understand any grammatical phenomenon without taking into account its systemic position in the language —— without noting by what features it contrasts with other phenomena in the same system.

We have already seen that in terms of the voice-opposition, the ergative construction has nothing to contrast with; in other words, it is not a term in an opposition of 'active' to 'passive'. However, the ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTION does enter into a significant opposition with another term in many Caucasian languages, namely the NOMINATIVE CONSTRUCTION. Suprisingly, most writers on ergativity ignore this fact: yet, it is only by comparing the semantic features that characterize the nominative construction in opposition to the ergative construction that we can hope to elucidate the MEANING of ergativity.

37. I begin with the Abkhazo-Adyghe (NWC) languages. In all five of these languages, there is an ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTION $S^E\ O^N\ V$ (manifested in Abkhaz-Abaza by the sequence and form of pronominal prefixes on the verb, not by case-marking on the nouns), and there is also a contrasting NOMINATIVE CONSTRUCTION $S^N\ O^E\ V$, in which the subject is in the nominative case, the object is in the oblique (ergative) case, and the pronominal prefixes are in the reverse sequence. N.W. Caucasian specialists regard the construction $S^N\ O^E\ V$ as 'intransitive' and label it the 'indirect object construction'. Nevertheless, it is in direct oppo-

sition to the structure S^E O^N V.

The first clue to the semantic difference between the ergative and nominative constructions can be derived from the particular lexical verbs that occur most commonly in each construction. These are called 'transitive' (ergative) and 'intransitive' (nominative) verbs respectively, and much the same items fall into each class in all five NWC languages. Typical of the INTRANSITIVE (nominative) verbs are, in Adyghe: 'approach', 'avoid', 'beat', 'bite', 'blow' (trumpet, etc.), 'caress', 'curse', 'dig', 'enter', 'expect', 'echo' (or 'accompany in singing'), 'harm', 'help', 'grind', 'file', 'kiss', 'lick', 'look at', 'look after/nurse', 'meet', 'peck', 'pinch', 'pity', 'push', 'read', 'stab', 'steal', 'strike', 'suspect', 'watch', 'wait for'.

The common semantic thread that runs through all of these becomes more apparent when one looks at the contrast between specific 'transitive' (ergative) and 'intransitive' (nominative) verbs, for example:

TRANSITIVE (ERGATIVE)	INTRANSITIVE (NOMINATIVE)
kill	strike, stab, beat
write	read
see	look at

Illustrative sentences are: (49) The warrior killed the the enemy with his dagger, (50) The warrior stabbed the enemy with his dagger.

(49) bojetsɨ-m qamemk'e pɨjɨ-r ɨwɨk'ɨʁ.
warrior^E dagger^I enemy^N killed.

(50) bojetsɨ-r qamemk'e pɨjɨ-m jepɨdʒɨʁ.
warrior^N dagger^I enemy^E stabbed.

(51) The professor wrote the book, (52) The professor read the book.

(51) professorɨ-m txɨɬɨ-r ɨtxaʁ.
professor^E book^N wrote.

(52) professorɨ-r txɬɬɨ-m jedʒaʁ.
professor^{N} book^{E} read.

(53) The boy saw the pretty girl, (54) The boy looked at the pretty girl.

(53) k'ale-m pŝeŝedaxe-r ɨɬeʁ^{W}ɨʁ.
boy^{E} girl-pretty^{N} saw.

(54) k'ale-r pŝeŝedaxe-m pɬaʁe.
boy^{N} girl-pretty^{E} looked-at.

38. From such examples as these, we begin to get an idea of the semantic opposition between the ergative and nominative constructions. It seems clear that the assignment of a particular transitive lexical verb to the one class or the other has something to do with the 'strength' or 'effectiveness' of the verb-object relation. With the ergative verbs the verb-object relation is more intense; the verbally expressed event produces a stronger effect upon the object. Thus, to kill is more conclusive than to stab, to write is more creative than to read, to see (to form a completed visual image) is more definitive than to look at, etc. This, in part, explains why NWC specialists call the nominative construction 'intransitive' and the 'indirect object construction'. We have seen Adyghe languages, but parallels exist in all NWC languages. Thus Serdjučenko (1948) adduces similar examples ('read', 'look', 'bite', etc.) from Abaza, with respect to which he refers to the 'so-called indirect object, by which is meant an object which has no direct relationship to the action but is affected by it indirectly.'

39. In addition to those verbs which are traditionally said to belong to either the ergative or the nominative group, some verbs are stated to be variable — to be usable as ergative-transitives or nominative-'intransitives' with 'indirect object'. I suspect that we have here not so much an arbitrary and obligatory assignment of verbs to one group or the other, as a purely

semantically imposed distinction. Some verbs combine most readily with 'ergative semantics', others with 'nominative semantics'; but virtually any verb can fit into either construction provided it can be suitably contextualized. In any case, examples certainly occur of verbs assigned to one class actually turning up in the other construction. These, of course, are most illuminating, and are precisely what we need to elucidate the semantic distinction between the two constructions.

40. Among those who have discussed these dinstinctions with respect to the N.W. Caucasian languages are G.F. Turčaninov and N.F. Jakovlev.

In his 1940 Kabardian Grammar, Turčaninov likened the distinction between the nominative and ergative constructions to the distinction between the Russian imperfective and perfective aspects. Later (1949), no doubt under the influence of Jakovlev, whom he refers to, he admitted that the distinction is only partly similar to the aspectual one. He exemplifies the two constructions in two versions of the sentence (55) (56) The teacher admonished the youth.

(55) jeʁedʒak^{W}'e-r ŝ'ale-m jewiŝijaŝ.
teacher^{N} youth^{E} admonished.

(56) jeʁedʒak^{W}'e-m ŝ'ale-r jiwiŝijaŝ
teacher^{E} youth^{N} admonished.

Commenting on these versions, he says that it is not basically a matter of an aspectual (imperfective ~ perfective) distinction, but that in the first version (55) a Kabardian perceives the verbally expressed action as 'OUTER-LOCAL, superficial'. He goes on to say: 'In sentence ... (55) ... the verb ... indicates that the action of admonishing bore a superficial, external, character; it only touched upon the youth, not producing any radical, essential, changes in him as object.

'On the other hand, in the second case...(56)... the action which is the content of the verb is perceived as INNER-LOCAL,

showing that the admonishment produced an essential and radical change in the object.'

He gives a further example, using the verb to read, viz. (57) (58) The woman is reading the book.

(57) ts'ix^{W}ibze-r txiɬi-m jewdʒe.
woman^{N} book^{E} reads.

(58) ts'ix^{W}ibze-m txiɬi-r jewdʒe
woman^{E} book^{N} reads.

He points out that in these examples, in addition to the same 'outer-local' vs. 'inner-local' distinction, as above, there is a second shade of meaning. In (57) the subject is reading superficially, without the intention of carrying through to the end, whereas in (58) she is reading assiduously, intending to go on to the end. One can capture an approximation of this distinction in Scots, with the translations (57) The wife was haein a bit read o the buik and (58) The wife was readin the buik.

Jakovlev's 1940 article on Ancient linguistic connections between Europe, Asia and America is a very important document in this connection. Jakovlev is concerned with typological resemblances between Caucasian, Paleosiberian and Amerindian languages. Among other things, he adduces and discusses examples of the quite parallel distinction between the ergative and nominative constructions in Abkhaz, Kabardian, Adyghe and the Paleosiberian language Chukot (Chukchee).

He points out that the ergative construction, as compared with the nominative construction, displays a particular shade of meaning, namely 'the aspiration or intention of the acting person to carry through the action to the end, i.e. to full completion and at the same time to full penetration into the object.' The nominative construction exemplified in (57) differs semantically by a 'nuance of absence of obligatory completion of the action. The action in this case makes only superficial contact with the object, which originally had a shade rather of an ad-

verbial complement than an object.' He therefore calls the nominative construction of (57) 'AIMLESS' and the ergative construction of (58) 'AIMFUL'. These rather felicitous English terms are actually provided by Jakovlev himself as parenthetic translations. He provides a further Kabardian example in which, as he says, the semantic difference between the two constructions is brought out with particular clarity. These are (59) and (60) The dog is biting the bone.

(59) ħe-m q^{w}'ɨpŝħe-r je-dzaq'e.
dog^{E} bone^{N} bites.
(razgryzaet 'bites through [to the marrow]')

(60) ħe-r q^{w}'ɨpŝħe-m je-w-dzaq'e.
dog^{N} bone^{E} bites.
(glož̌et, obgladyvaet 'gnaws, gnaws around [superficially]')

41. So, then, the difference between the configurations S^{E} V O^{N} and S^{N} V O^{E} in the North West Caucasian languages emerges rather clearly as having to do with the relationship of the verbal activity to its object. In the ergative construction, the V-O^{N} linkage is close, effective, penetrating. In the nominative construction, the V-O^{E} linkage is looser, less effective, superficial. It is as if the function of the ergative case is to show that the referent of the noun so marked is somewhat DETACHED from the verbally expressed relation. Thus we might say that S^{E} V O^{N} means 'something is being done to an object (incidentally, by the named subject)', whereas S^{N} V O^{E} means 'something is being done by the subject (incidentally, to the named object)'.

42. We turn now to the Nakh languages. Dešeriev, in his Comparative-Historical Grammar (1963), shows that in all three Nakh languages there is an opposition between ergative and nominative transitive constructions. From the more detailed accounts of Chechen and Batsbiy in Jakovlev (1940a) and Dešeriev (1953), we learn that there are actually three types of transitive constructions. One of these is a simple ergative transitive configuration S^{E} O^{N} V, (in which the verb agrees in class with the object,

as indicated by the ligature). The other two transitive constructions involve compound verb-phrases composed of a participial form of the lexical verb and the copula. $S^N\ O^N\ V\ v$ and $S^E\ O^N\ V\ v$ (the actual sequence of this last in Jakovlev's Chechen examples is $O^N\ S^E\ V\ v$, but the Batsbiy examples are $S^E\ O^N\ V\ v$). Examples from Chechen are: (61), (62), (63) all meaning shades of I'm working, I'm doing work, I do work.

(61) $S^E\ O^N\ V$ as bolχ b-o. I^E work^N do.

This means 'I am doing work, I am working at a given moment and in general.'

(62) $S^N\ O^N\ V\ v$ so bolχ b-eʃ w-u. I^N work^N doing am.

This represents what Jakovlev calls the 'generalized construction'. This implies that the action is understood to be customary or obligatory, or to be the habitual occupation of the subject, or else indicates the ability of the subject to carry out the action. Thus (62) means 'I am in the habit of doing work, my occupation is doing work.'

(63) $O^N\ S^E\ V\ v$ bolχ as b-eʃ b-u. work^N I^E doing am.

This is what Jakovlev calls the 'process-transitive construction'. The meaning is that 'the subject is in the process of acting upon a definite single object, this process including not only a given concrete moment but also a certain period of time before and after the present moment.' It is significant that he emphasizes again in a footnote that in this construction the verbally expressed activity relates to a definite object. Jakovlev's few examples of this construction exhibit the sequence O S V: he doesn't say if this is obligatory. Earlier in his book (p.20), he mentions that the normal Chechen sequence is S O V, but that it is freely changeable to express 'fine shades of meaning'. The O S V sequence here may be connected with his insistence on the specificity of the object. So, then, (63) means 'I am occupied with a given piece of work, I am in the process of doing a given task.'

In the minimally constrasting pair (62) and (63) we hear an echo, though perhaps a little atenuated, of the same kind of semantic contrast we had in the NWC contrast of $S^N\ O^E\ V$ ~ $S^E\ O^N\ V$. In the ergative construction, there is some emphasis on the carry-over of the verbal action onto the object, whereas in the nominative construction there is more emphasis on the activity itself, as an habitual occupation.

43. Exactly the same types of construction occur in Batsbiy, but, according to Dešeriev, in the third type, $S^E\ O^N\ V\ v$, 'the subject ... is perceived as actively creating, producing the action. Here the active rôle of the subject in the on-going action is underlined.' Here Batsbiy, true to form, differs from other Caucasian languages. Where we have previously seen the CREATIVENESS of the transitive ergative verbal action as a function of its EFFECT ON THE OBJECT, in Batsbiy this ergative idea of creativity appears to be THROWN BACK ONTO THE SUBJECT. This is at least consistent with the Batsbiy peculiarity of having a subject in the ergative case with certain 'active' intransitive verbs, as mentioned in 20 above.

44. In the Dagestanian languages, nominative transitive constructions of both types — $S^N\ V\ O^N$ and $S^N\ V\ O^E$ — occur in opposition to the more common $S^E\ V\ O^N$. Undoubtedly, the nominative transitive is less frequent than the ergative transitive construction. Being regarded as an 'exceptional' construction, it is not usually mentioned at all in short grammatical sketches. Consequently, though I have found examples only from Avar, Hunzib, Dargi, Lak, Tsakhur and Khinalug, I suspect that a nominative-transitive construction can occur in others, perhaps all. Indeed, Dešeriev (1959) actually says that this is so.

45. For Avar, A.A. Bokarëv (1949) cites these examples: (64) Having gone out with pick and shovel, they are making a road, and (65) They are making a road.

(64) gaza-gun bel-gun un, hez nuχ habuleb bugo.
pick-with shovel-with having-gone, they^E road^N making are.

(65) hel nuχ habulel rugo.
they[N] road[N] making are.

(Note that in the ergative sentence (64), both parts of the compound verb agree with the singular non-person object [class-marker b], while in the nominative sentence (65) the verb agrees with the plural subject [plural class marker l/r].)

Bokarëv comments that the second example (65) 'is opposed to the first in a specific way. The first expresses primarily the action of the subject UPON A DEFINITE OBJECT, the second primarily indicates the occupation of the subject, the fact that the subject is in the process of fulfilling an action, it characterizes him in terms of this action LAYING NO SPECIAL STRESS UPON WHAT PARTICULAR OBJECT THE ACTION IS DIRECTED TO.' (Emphasis mine.)

There are a number of other examples in Bokarëv's Avar Syntax which clearly show that the difference between the ERGATIVE and the NOMINATIVE construction is that the ergative construction underlines the relation of verb to object, the nominative construction lays more stress on the relation between subject and verb — the activity of the subject.

Avar also has a special durative or iterative verb form: this verb form is used only in a nominative intransitive construction. The ergative construction thus appears to be incompatible with this type of verb, which underlines the unfolding or duration of the act, rather than its EFFECT upon the object.

46. The previous author's brother, in his sketch of the Tsez language, Hunzib, (E.A. Bokarëv, 1959) mentions that in this language, too, one can form durative or iterative verbs, but that in Hunzib, unlike Avar, these verbs, though said to be 'intransitive', can take a 'complement'. These Hunzib verbs have a NOMINATIVE subject and a COMPLEMENT or (in the terms used in this article) an OBJECT in the INSTRUMENTAL case — i.e., the construction is essentially the same as the NWC S^N V O^E construction. Examples: (66) Father is mowing the grass, (67) Father occupies himself with the mowing of grass.

(66) ʁbul bəχ koʃe.
father^{E} grass^{N} mows.

(67) ʁbu bəχod koʃela.
father^{N} grass^{I} mows.

The use of the expression occupies himself with in the translation of (67) is undoubtedly intended to emphasize the activity, rather than the effect upon the object.

47. In Dargi, one of the five Dagestanian literary languages, there is a nominative-transitive construction of the type S^{N} O^{E} V. This construction is exemplified and discussed in Byxovskaja (1938) and in Abdullaev (1971). Examples of this construction, contrasting with the more usual ergative-transitive construction are:

(68) ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTION

a. nuni q'ats' bukuIra. b. nuni ʒuz butʃ'uIra.
I^{E} bread^{N} eat. I^{E} book^{N} read.

(69) NOMINATIVE CONSTRUCTION

a. nu q'ats'li ukuIra b. nu ʒuzli utʃ'uIra
I^{N} bread^{E} eat. I^{N} book^{E} read.

In both (68) and (69), the verb agrees in person with the subject (-ra), whether it is in the ergative or the nominative case. In the ergative construction (68), it agrees with the object (b-), but not in the nominative construction (69).

Abdullaev discusses this construction at great length. He insists that the nominative construction is not transitive, since it has the verb-noun concord pattern of intransitives, and that the ergative noun here is a complement, not an object. Nevertheless, we must put this Dargi construction on a par with the equivalent NWC construction and regard it as S^{N} O^{E} V for purposes of comparison within our frame of reference. I feel quite justified in doing this, since Abdullaev himself at one point (p. 206) refers to the ergative noun in this construction as the 'object of action'. Abdullaev criticizes Byxovskaja for attempting to

convey the meaning of this construction in terms of 'continuous action' or by using the Russian verb zanimat'sja 'to be occupied in, to be busy with', etc. He himself says (p. 206), 'The Dargi verb in the construction with the ergative case of the object of action is a verb of reflexive meaning, and not a meaning of continuous action.' What he intends to convey by this is clear from some of his translations of the construction. For example, a past tense version of (69a) is translated as ja xlebom naelsja, i.e., 'I ate my fill of bread', the emphasis being on the activity of eating one's fill rather than on the means by which this was accomplished. The type of Russian reflexive verb Abdullaev has in mind is thus one which has a middle meaning, and emphasizes the ACTIVITY and its EFFECT UPON THE SUBJECT rather than its effect upon the object. I think this, indeed, was the kind of meaning Byxovskaja, too (as well as the Bokarëvs), was trying to capture by using circumlocutions which tend to throw the ACTIVITY referred to by the verb into prominence. It seems clear, once again, that in Dargi we see the semantic difference between the ERGATIVE and the NOMINATIVE construction in much the same light as earlier. The ergative construction directs more attention to the VERB-OBJECT relation: the nominative construction highlights the verbal relation itself, and the ACTIVITY OF THE SUBJECT.

48. Lak also has a nominative transitive construction, contrasting with the ergative construction, as we can see from Zhirkov (1955, pp. 138-139), although the author gives no account of its meaning.

49. Among Lezgian languages, a couple of examples of a nominative transitive construction (contrasting with the ergative construction) in Tsakhur are cited in Kurbanov(1967). These are sentences of the S^N O^N V v type, meaning 'Father is cutting firewood in the yard', and 'The boy is eating dinner in the house (or at home)'; they are described as 'expressing durative action.' Again, note the emphasis on (durative) ACTION rather than on the effect upon the object, and the presence of a locative expression in both may be significant, as underlining activity going on in

a PLACE (rather than with respect to an OBJECT).

50. Finally, in Dešeriev's (1959) grammar of Khinalug, one of the three Lezgian languages of the so-called Shah-Dagh subgroup spoken in northern Azerbaijan, we find another example of the $S^N O^N V$ v type of construction. Dešeriev (a native speaker of Chechen) calls this the 'General Construction' — echoing Jakovlev's name for the comparable structure in Chechen. He gives examples such as (70) This boy eats bread with honey.

(70) ʁə gədi pʃə nyts'iʃkili q'andə atmə.
this boy^N bread^N honey^C eating is.
(C = comitative case)

He describes the meaning of the 'General Construction' as 'action which is protracted, unlimited in time. Thus, in Russian we say: he works in town, implying that he generally works in town, and not just at the present moment.'

Once again, though not so strikingly as in some other examples, we find that the nominative construction highlights the ACTIVITY, and thereby takes some weight off its EFFECT upon the object. It is, incidentally, in this book that Dešeriev claims (p. 170) that the nominative construction co-exists with the ergative construction in all Caucasian mountain languages.

51. By now it is clear that in most Caucasian languages, the ergative construction is not a mere obligatory surface peculiarity of transitive sentences, but is, rather, a term in a meaningful opposition of ERGATIVE versus NOMINATIVE construction. No matter what form is taken by its surface manifestation, the ergative construction implies a tight, penetrative, 'aimful' relationship between the verbally expressed activity and its object. The nominative construction, on the other hand, implies a tight relationship between the activity and its subject: it stresses rather the activity of the subject than the effect upon an object. A distinction of approximately this type can be made in non-ergative languages, but it is not manifested in the same way. In terms of the diathetic relations - the relations between verbs and their subjects and objects -

ergative and non-ergative, or 'nominative', languages show a difference of alignment or grouping. In ergative languages, the weak, or loose, nominative transitive construction is aligned with the simple, objectless, intransitive construction. The strongly transitive ergative construction is treated as something quite different. In nominative languages, the major demarcation lies between simple, objectless intransitives on the one hand, and transitives on the other: both strong and weak transitives are lumped together, as it were. Using rather obvious symbolism, we can indicate these differences of alignment as follows:

NOMINATIVE LANGUAGES	DIATHETIC RELATIONS	ERGATIVE LANGUAGES
TRANSITIVE	S--V⟶O	ERGATIVE
	S—V--O	NOMINATIVE
INTRANSITIVE	S - V	

It should be noted that the close relation between the S—V--O or S - V constructions in ergative languages is often marked by their sharing the same type of intransitive verb form, whereas the S--V⟶O construction requires a distinct transitive verb form.

52. When I talk of ERGATIVE LANGUAGES, I mean no more than 'languages that possess an ergative construction' — just as one might call, say, Slovenian, Arabic and Maori 'dual languages' because all three possess a dual number. I leave open the question of whether there is a distinct typological class of languages characterized by a constellation of associated features of which ergativity is only one. Klimov (1973) appears to favor this view, and also the hypothesis that ergative languages constitute a kind of evolutionary class of languages, in which ergativity is an historical transformation of an earlier opposition of active (animate) to inactive (inanimate). The rather anomalous ergative subjects of intransitive 'action-verbs' in Batsbiy and other Caucasian languages would be a lingering trace of this more archaic phase. While certainly not rejecting Klimov's views out of hand — he is, after all, an outstanding specialist on ergativity — I prefer to be non-commital

on these points.

53. Various conclusions flow from the recognition of the ergative as a markedly transitive construction. The first point is that this provides an additional argument against the interpretation of the ergative construction as passive. In languages which have the opposition ACTIVE vs. PASSIVE, the passive is always intransitive: this is why the passive construction takes no direct object, but only an agential or instrumental complement. It is obvious that in languages like Adyghe and Dargi which have a S^N V O^E -type construction, this nominative construction is formally more akin to the passive than is the ergative. The intransitive nature of the passive is emphasized by Dešerieva (1974) in an important work that came to my notice only after all the foregoing was already in typescript. Dešerieva further points out that in Chechen, an intransitive 'passive' meaning of the verb is conveyed by the NOMINATIVE construction, while the ERGATIVE construction is transitive and active. Thus we have (71) The earth was plowed by tractors and (72) Tractors ploughed the earth.

(71) latta traktorʃtsa æχna du.
earth^N tractors^I ploughed.

(72) traktorʃa latta æχna du.
tractors^E earth^N ploughed.

As can be seen, the verb has exactly the same, neutral form in both sentences: there is no formal passive here (only a Russian-based pseudo-passive)

54. The second point has to do with the relationship of 'strong transitivity' to aspect and tense. As Turčaninov pointed out (1940, 1949 - see 40 above), the distinction between the ergative and nominative constructions has something in common with the distinction between perfective and imperfective aspects. This point was also made by Regamey (1954) particularly with respect to Tibetan, which apparently has an opposition of ergative construction to nominative construction, much like the Caucasian one. But Regamey goes further than this. He shows clearly the relationship of this diathetic relation not only to aspect, but also to tense. In the following

translation, I have substituted ERGATIVE and NOMINATIVE for Regamey's terms OBJECTIVE and SUBJECTIVE, which are clearly synonymous with ours. Having pointed out (p. 373) that the nominative construction is associated with the imperfective, and the ergative with the perfective, he goes on to say, 'From this association there results, secondarily, the almost general association of the ergative construction with the past. This association is not fortuitous: it results from the semantic character of the nominative and ergative diatheses. When we envisage a transitive action with respect to the patient [i.e., in the ergative construction, J.C.C.], we take account of the EFFECT of this action, or that which is accomplished. This action has already been detached from the agent, it has been transferred onto the patient. On the other hand, the imperfective action, which has not yet been accomplisned, which is in the process of being carried out, relates to the agent rather than to the patient. The nominative construction thus serves in particular to express the present, the imperfect, the durative tenses. In the future, both constructions are possible, for the notion or future admits the perfective aspect just as much as the imperfective.'

Regamey very properly remarks that this point had previously been made by Tagliavini (1937). Regamey's presentation is clearer, however, and free from Tagliavini's theory that the ergative is un caso enfatico, which leads to the view (erroneous, in my opinion) that in the ergative construction it is the subject, rather than the object or the effect upon the object, that is brought into prominence.

55. We can now see a principled explanation for the otherwise totally anomalous fact that the ergative construction is associated with the aorist tense-group in Georgian and Svan, and, indeed, that the ergative construction is confined to a past tense in Iranian, Indic and Dardic languages (except for Shina, which can have the ergative in all tenses): since the ergative construction is effect-oriented, it has a natural affinity with perfective aspects and past tenses. In all these languages, as in Georgian, the opposition of the ergative and nominative constructions is absorbed, as it were,

in the tense-aspect opposition and thus has no independent semantic function. There are, however, numerous languages in Asia in which the ergative vs. nominative opposition is functional and carries much the same semantic distinction as in most Caucasian languages. Tibetan has already been mentioned in this respect. In addition, there are traces of an analogous opposition in Finno-Ugrian, notably in the Ob-Ugrian languages Khanty (Óstyak) and Mansiy (Vogul). The opposition is clearly present in the five Paleosiberian languages of the Chukot-Kamchatka group, and also in Eskimo-Aleut. Descriptions of a few of these languages suggest that the ergative construction underlines the effectiveness of the subject rather than the effect upon the object, a variant of ergativity that we have seen in Batsbiy. For the most part, however, the meaning of the ergative construction is essentially the same as in most Caucasian languages. Of the three remaining Paleosiberian languages, the language-isolates Ket, Nivkh (Gilyak) and Yukagir, only Ket seems to have a trace of ergativity in the distribution of its two series of pronominal prefixes and infixes in the verb: on this, see Klimov (1973, pp. 65-66) and the authorities cited there. Nivkh and Yukagir are non-ergative languages, but the latter has a particularly interesting morphological feature which will be referred to again later.

56. It is clear that the ergative construction is not a passive construction, but an active or neutral one. Nevertheless, it is instructive to consider to what extent the functions of passive vs. active correspond to those of nominative vs. ergative transitive construction. In languages with a formal passive transformation, such as English, there are two distinct types, or phases, of passivation which we may call VERBAL PASSIVATION and SENTENTIAL PASSIVATION.

By verbal passivation we mean the selection of a special passive form of verb, with no change in the lexical exponent of the subject. Thus, the verbal passive of John ate fish is John was eaten, with the possible addition of an agential complement, for instance, by fish. Sentential passivation requires not only the selection of a passive verb form, but also a lexical switch, whereby the lexical

exponent of what was originally the object becomes exponent of the subject. The original subject may be deleted, or else be inserted as an agential complement. Thus the sentential passive of John ate fish is Fish was/were eaten with the possible addition of by John. Each of these two types of passivation has its particular function or functions. The function of VERBAL PASSIVATION can be roughly described as REVERSAL OF THE VERBALLY EXPRESSED RELATION. Since the verbal passive refers to a different state of affairs than does the active, it is quite often used contrastively to underline an antithesis, as in these recently observed examples:

(73) (in conversation) —

Were you eating out of doors?

We weren't eating: we were being eaten.
The mosquitoes were awful!

(74) (heard on Canadian TV)

The year America finally disengaged from
Indo-China ... or was disengaged....

Contrastive reversals of the verbal relation, such as these, are perhaps the commonest use of verbal passivation in English. An important application of the contrastive use of verbal passivation is to be seen in the disambiguation of ambiguous expressions such as The chickens are ready to eat vs. ... to be eaten or the notorious sentence The shooting of the hunters was terrible. We can disambiguate the last sentence by using the inflectional genitive hunters' and contrasting the active and passive forms of the verbal noun, thus:

(75) The hunters' shooting was terrible.

(76) The hunters' being shot was terrible.

This particular use of verbal passivation was matched by an Avar informant in the use of the MASDAR, or verbal noun of the iterative-durative verb in (77), but of the basic verb in (78), thus:

(77) tɬ'vahdej tʃanaqabazul kveʃab buk'ana.
shooting(iter) hunters' bad was

(78) tɬv'ahi tʃanaqabazul kveʃab buk'ana.
shooting hunters' bad was.

In (77) it is clear that tʃanaqabazul must be interpreted as a subject genitive, not only because of the semantic improbability of the hunters' being repeatedly shot, but for the more important grammatical reason that in Avar an iterative-durative verb must be intransitive: consequently, the single NP associated with it must be in a subject relation to it.

This Avar example is only one of several possible Caucasian equivalences for the English opposition of verbal active to verbal passive: in Adyghe, for instance, the same disambiguation would probably be effected by using phrases which could be translated literally as (approximately) (77) the hunters their-shooting and (78) the hunters-shooting.

57. When we turn to the sentential passive, we perhaps find a less fortuitous and more systematic relationship between English and Caucasian forms. The functions of SENTENTIAL PASSIVATION all have to do with the REDISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR INFORMATION POINTS as compared with the original active sentence. Specifically, we have:

(i) elimination of the original subject — particularly useful when the agent or source of the verbally expressed relation is unknown or communicationally unimportant, e.g., Brutus murdered Caesar → Caesar was murdered;

(ii) simultaneously with (i), upgrading of the verb, which now becomes the last non-anaphoric member of the sentence, the position of greatest information-value in an English sentence;

(iii) if the subject is reinserted as an agential complement, it is 'up-graded' from the informationally trivial position of the 'given' to the informationally primary position that was taken by the verb in (ii), i.e., Brutus murdered Caesar → Caesar was murdered by Brutus.

The first of these functions is regularly matched in North Caucasian languages by simply deleting the subject of an ergative transitive. Thus, the Avar equivalents of (79) Father has sent a telegram and (80) A telegram has been sent would be:

(79) Insutssa tel bit'un bugo.
father^{E} telegram^{N} sent is.

(80) tel bit'un bugo.
telegram^{N} sent is.

The past participle bit'un is, of course, neutral with respect to voice, and in a word-rank translation would be more accurately, but less concisely, represented as 'having sent or sent'.

This translation-equivalence of the English passive to an (originally) ergative sentence with deleted subject is quite systematic (see also example (47) in 33, above). We can see this clearly from Gunaev's (1972) article on the English present perfect and its equivalents in Avar and Lak. In that article, there are many examples like the following, meaning (81) This year many houses have been built in Makhachkala.

(81) Avar: hab sonalda maʁatʃq'alajalda ʕemeral minabi ran rugo.
Lak: ha-ʃinu maʁatʃq'alaliv tʃ'ærussa q'atri durnu dur.
this year Makhachkala - in many houses^{N} built are.

Of thirty English examples in the article, eleven are passives, like (81). In every case, the Caucasian (Avar and/or Lak) translation equivalent is an ergative sentence with deleted subject. The remaining nineteen examples are all English actives and there is not one case of subject deletion in their Caucasian equivalents.

The second function of sentential passive, the 'up-grading' of the verb, is clearly closer to the Caucasian nominative transitive construction, in which the attenuation of transitivity throws the verbally expressed relation into prominence.

58. In a general way, in languages with a meaningful opposition of ergative to nominative constructions, the semantic field covered by the opposition is at least partly co-extensive with that of information-distribution or information-focus. Menovščikov (1967) gives a very clear instance of this in Asiatic Eskimo. He provides three versions of the sentence The man leads the dog corresponding to three different locations of what in Russian is often called the LOGICAL ACCENT, viz. (82) The MAN leads the dog, (83) The man LEADS the

dog and (84) The man leads the DOG. Not surprisingly, it is (84), where the 'logical accent' is on DOG, that has the ergative construction: the strong transitivity of the ergative highlights the object as well as the effect of the action upon it. The first two examples both have the nominative construction: in these sentences, the difference in 'logical accent' is conveyed by special markers in the verb form.

(82) juk agljataquq qikmimiŋ.
MAN^{N} leads dog^{I}

(83) juk agljatiquq qikmimiŋ.
Man^{N} LEADS dog^{I}

(84) jugim agljataqa qikmiq.
Man^{E} leads DOG^{N}

It is the syllable ti in the verb of (83) that indicates that the verb is highlighted in this sentence.

Eskimo thus appears to stand midway between geographically contiguous languages — the Chukot-Kamchatka group, which are ergative languages, and Yukagir, which is non-ergative but has a more developed morphological system of 'logical accentuation' than that of Eskimo. In generating a Yukagir sentence, the speaker selects special morphological forms of subject, verb and object to indicate which of these carries the principal new information.

59. We may conclude by observing that ergative languages appear to fall into three types, or more exactly, into two main types, the second of which is subdivided. These types are (1) FUNCTIONAL ERGATIVE languages, in which the distinction between ergative-transitive and nominative-transitive is meaningful and (2) FORMAL ERGATIVE languages in which the ergative construction is the unique and obligatory construction of transitive sentences and is consequently meaningless. FORMAL ERGATIVE languages fall into two sub-types (a) UNRESTRICTED, in which transitive verbs are construed ergatively in all tenses, and (b) RESTRICTED, in which the ergative construction is confined to transitive verbs in a past tense or perfective aspect.

There seem to be no languages in which the ergative construc-

tion is functional (independently meaningful) but is also restricted to the past tense. This is not fortuitous, since, as we pointed out above, where the ergative construction is restricted to a past tense this is because the meaning of ergativity has fused with that of the past (or perfective). Where the ergative construction retains its distinctive meaning, there is no motivation for restricting it to past tense.

60. Examples of the various types of ergative languages are:

(1) FUNCTIONAL ERGATIVE: North Caucasian languages, Tibetan, Chukot-Kamchatka languages, Eskimo-Aleut.

(2a) FORMAL UNRESTRICTED: the Kartvelian language Laz and the Dardic language Shina. Possibly Basque.

(2b) FORMAL RESTRICTED: Georgian, Svan, the ergative languages of the Iranian, Indic and Dardic groups (except Shina); also, to a large extent, Burushaski (though two or three verbs in Burushaski can be construed ergatively in the present as well as the past).

I am not sufficiently informed about the Polynesian, Australian and Amerindian ergative languages to know what types they belong to. In any case, I have already gone somewhat beyond the scope of the present article, which is primarily concerned only with ergativity in Caucasian languages.

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Appendix A

Caucasian Languages

N.W. Caucasian (Abkhazo-Adyghe): 0. Ubykh (spoken by a handful of people in Western Turkey) 1. Abkhaz 2. Abaza 3. Adyghe 4. Kabardian (Kabardino-Cherkess)

N.C. Caucasian (Nakh languages): 5. Chechen 6. Ingush 7. Batsbiy

N.E. Caucasian (Dagestanian): 8. Avar 9. Andi group (Andi, Botlikh, Godoberi, Karati, Chamali, Bagwali, Akhwakh, Tindi) 10. Tsez (or Dido) group (Tsez (Dido), Hinukh, Khwarshi, Bezhti, Hunzib) 11. Lak 12. Dargi Lezgian group: 13. Artchi 14. Tabasaran 15. Aghul 16. Rutul 17. Tsakhur 18. Lezgi 19. Krytz 20. Budukh 21. Khinalug 22. Udi

S. Caucasian (Kartvelian): 23. Georgian 24. Svan Zan dialects: 25. Megrelian 26. Laz

APPENDIX B

Transcription

Among Caucasian languages, only Georgian has its own ancient alphabet and a literature going back to the fifth century. Of the other Caucasian languages, a very few were sporadically, and unofficially, written before the Revolution. Since then, the Soviet authorities have created no fewer than ten new Caucasian literary languages, all of which are now regularly written in Cyrillic-based orthographies. In the specialist literature, apart from the official orthographies, use is made of a great variety of phonetic and phonemic transcriptions, based on Georgian, Cyrillic and Roman. It seemed simpler, for the present purpose, to present all examples in a fairly consistent, more or less phonemic, IPA transcription.

For the most part, the attribution of basic or 'cardinal' values to the IPA characters will ensure an approximately correct reading. A few special usages must, however, be mentioned.

The character /k'/ used in Adyghe texts actually represents a glottalic palatalized lamino-postalveolar affricate of the type [tɕ] or [cɕ]. The characters /ŝ/ /ŝ'/ /ẑ/, occuring in Adyghe and Kabardian texts, represent the peculiar N.W. Caucasian 'hissing-hushing' fricatives, which are articulated with the tongue-tip touching the lower front teeth (as for [s]) but the narrowest articulatory channel at the extreme back of the alveolar ridge (as for a lamino-postalveolar [ʃ]). With respect to other consonants, note in particular that in Avar (but not in the other languages) /q'/ represents a very strongly affricated [qχ'], and /tɬ'/ is a glottalic lateral affricate with very noisy rattling molar affrication; note also that the use of the two dorsal fricative characters /x/ and /χ/ is significant — many Caucasian languages make a significant distinction between velar and uvular fricatives.

With respect to vowels, note that /e/ and /o/ are generally more open that their cardinal values. In N.W. Caucasian languages, all vowels tend to be centralized and to assimilate to neighboring consonants. The characters /a^{ʕ}/or /i^{ʕ}/ in Tsakhur represent pharyngalized vowels, produced with the root of the tongue drawn well back into the pharynx.

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